Northwest Territories

GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
REVIEW OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR SENIORS

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INTRODUCTION

In June 2000, the Legislative Assembly passed a motion recommending that the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) review all programs and services offered to seniors in the NWT. A Working Group, comprised of officials from program departments and central agencies, as well as a representative from the NWT Seniors Society[1], was created to address this motion. A Terms of Reference, included as **Appendix A,** guided the Working Group.

The Working Group was mandated to:

- Identify options for better program coordination, integration and harmonization;
- Identify any gaps in current programming;
- Research and analyze issues related to seniors programs;
- Consult with seniors and the general public on seniors' programs;
- Prepare a report, with recommendations for consideration by government.

The Working Group developed a work plan that had two primary courses of action: an analysis of available information and public consultations. Based on initial meetings, the Working Group identified a number of goals for the project:

- Simplifying program applications and procedures;
- Reviewing the eligibility criteria of seniors programs;
- Identifying ways to streamline programs and services through integration, harmonization and/or better coordination;
- Identifying key research and demographic issues.

A series of public consultations was held in eleven communities across the Northwest Territories during the spring of 2001. In each community, three separate sessions were held: one for seniors, one for caregivers and staff, and one for the general public. The Working Group also held a one-day workshop with the NWT Seniors Society in April 2001. The schedule of community visits and listing of written submissions received during the project are attached in **Appendix B.**

The following report represents a summary of the groups' work and includes a series of recommendations to the Deputy Ministers responsible for the Social Agenda.

[1] The Working Group included officials from the Department of Health and Social Services; Education, Culture and Employment; NWT Housing Corporation; Municipal and Community Affairs; Transportation; Financial Management Board Secretariat; Bureau of Statistics; Executive; and the NWT Seniors' Society.

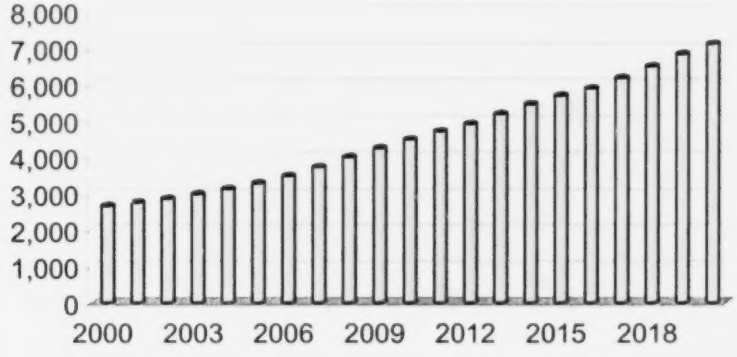
WHAT DO WE KNOW?

The following provides an overview of some of the most important factors to consider when developing or reviewing programs for seniors, including population data, socioeconomic information, and health status. ***Statistical Profile of Seniors in the NWT*** provides further information. It was prepared by the Bureau of Statistics and is attached as **Appendix D**.

A RAPIDLY GROWING POPULATION

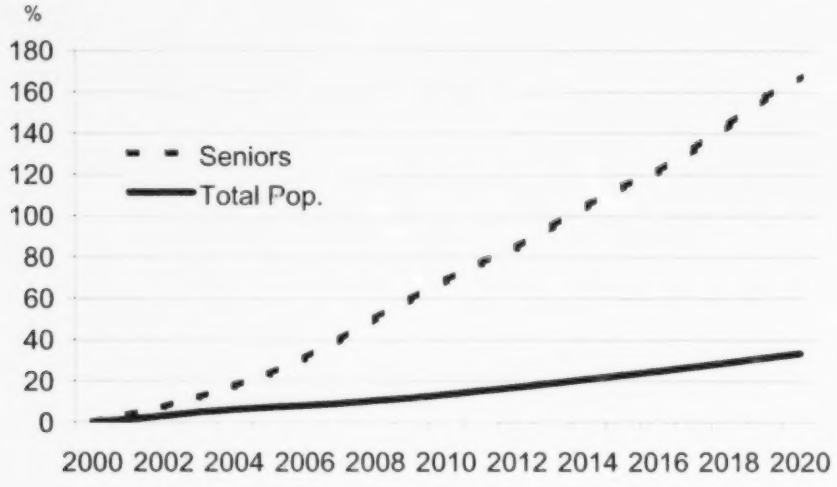
In 2001 there were approximately 2800 persons age 60 or above residing in the Northwest Territories. **Figure (1)** identifies the projected population change for NWT Seniors to the year 2020. The largest single change in the seniors' population occurs in the rapid increase of absolute numbers in this time period. The total number of seniors in the NWT is expected to reach 7000 by the year 2020.

Figure 1



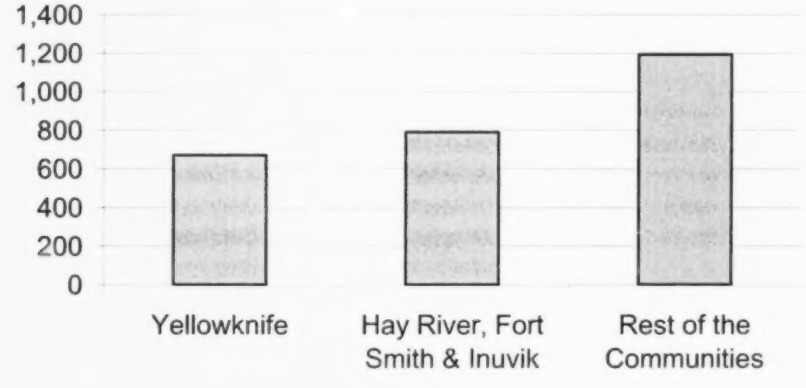
Along with the absolute increase in the number of seniors, it is also important to note the rate of increase in the seniors' population far outstrips the rate for the total population. Growth in the seniors' population is occurring across all NWT communities **Figure (2)**. Seniors age 60 and above currently represent approximately 6% of the total population. In twenty years, seniors will comprise about 12 % of the total population.

Figure 2



Of the current population of 2800, males and females are evenly split at 50 % each. Almost 25% of the seniors age 60 and above in the NWT reside in Yellowknife, while 30% of seniors reside in regional centres like Fort Smith and Hay River. The remaining 45% live in the smaller communities of the NWT **Figure (3)**. It is anticipated that seniors, like other segments of the territorial population will continue the current trend and migrate slowly toward the larger centres of the NWT.

Figure 3



SENIORS AND DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

Many factors contribute to the health of seniors, including income, education, genetic endowment, and the physical and social environments. In particular, there is good evidence that education, housing, and income affect health status[2]. Poor, less educated seniors are more likely to suffer from ill health than those with greater economic and educational resources.

The GNWT Bureau of Statistics reports that in 1999 the median income for seniors in the NWT over 65 years was approximately $14,300 and approximately 60% of that income came from government transfers.[3] Income levels for seniors in Yellowknife and Hay River were significantly higher than the rest of the NWT[4]. This could reflect the fact that seniors, especially male seniors between the ages of 60-64, may still be working and receiving higher incomes from wages. Males in the NWT have slightly more income than females.

Seniors in the NWT live in a variety of public and private housing situations. Seniors own and live in their own homes, live with families in a common household, rent apartments, and live in seniors' independent housing units or reside in long-term care facilities. Generally the rate of core need for housing for seniors is significantly higher outside of Yellowknife, than in the City of Yellowknife[5].

SENIORS HEALTH STATUS

Overall, life expectancy in the NWT increased between 1981 and 1997, from 71 to 77 years[6]. Females have a longer life expectancy than males in the NWT, and non-aboriginal females live longer than their aboriginal counterparts. Despite continuing improvements in the NWT, seniors in the rest of Canada live longer than seniors in the NWT.

In 1997, cancer and heart disease accounted for over half of the deaths of territorial seniors. Respiratory disease accounted for another 15% while cerebrovascular disease accounted for 8% and injuries 7%. Lifestyle choices can play a role in cause of death, as illustrated by the fact that 13 of the 25 deaths of seniors attributed to cancer were due to lung cancer, most of which were smoking related.

When NWT seniors think about and rate the status of their health, many describe their health in negative terms, unlike seniors in other parts of Canada. In 1994-95, about 60% of seniors in the NWT said their health was either fair or poor, compared to 27% of their Canadian counterparts[7]. Just 15% of NWT seniors indicated they had very good health, while 40% of Canadian seniors rated their health this way. Interestingly enough,

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[2] Federal, Provincial and Territorial Advisory Committee on Population Health, "Toward a Healthy Future: Second report on the Health of Canadians", 1999
[3] Seniors, by Source of Income and Age, NWT 1999, GNWT Bureau of Statistics
[4] Statistical Profile of Seniors, GNWT Bureau of Statistics, April 2001
[5] IBID
[6] Epi North, Department of Health and Social Services, Spring 2001, Vol13, Issue 2.
[7] IBID

younger age groups in the NWT do not perceive their health status in the same way as NWT seniors do – an estimated 52% of NWT residents between the ages of 45 and 64 indicated they had good or excellent health, compared to 56% of other Canadians.

EXISTING SENIORS PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Seniors' programs and services exist in a complex service environment. Within government a number of departments deliver complementary programs that, in many cases, have varying and different eligibility criteria. Financial support type programs are an example of this. The policy base for programming is not consistent across department lines and is either significantly different from department to department, or is not clearly identified. Departments have different delivery mechanisms at the community level. There is little horizontal connection in the GNWT between departments at the headquarters or community levels. Existing programs and services targeted specifically at seniors are listed in **Appendix E.**

WHAT DID WE HEAR?

During the project, the working group heard a number of problems experienced by seniors and received a number of suggestions during the consultation process.

Seniors across the NWT were willing to identify their interests, concerns, problems, and ideas. In the consultations, three general themes or patterns emerged:

- Seniors wanted answers to their immediate concerns
- Seniors identified concerns with existing programs
- Seniors identified policy issues

In a number of instances, seniors clearly identified their feelings that the government has a good array of programs and services for them. Some seniors had knowledge of the level of programs and services in other places in the country and stated that NWT programs for seniors provided benefits as good as, if not better than, most of these jurisdictions. Though speaking well of GNWT programs, seniors, caregivers, and the general public also identified numerous concerns and issues

The Working Group heard and responded to, to the greatest extent possible, numerous personal requests to address an individual's immediate problem or concern. In many cases the issue was identified and the appropriate official present was able to deal with the issue or provide follow up.

During the consultation meetings and in their submissions, seniors spoke generally and specifically to government programs and services. The key points raised during the consultations are summarized below.

It is noted that the Working Group met with the Board of Directors of the NWT Seniors' Society for a full day workshop in April of 2001. Discussions at the workshop included a review of recommendations from the 1997 review as well as a discussion of those issues and priorities noted by the Society.

DEPARTMENTAL COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

During consultations and in the submissions, seniors stated that coordination of government programs is lacking, both within government and at the community level. Seniors felt that there was no specific person or body at the local level to help them out. Additionally, seniors felt that government departments were not working together, especially at the local level, but as well at headquarters. Seniors had many different and varying suggestions on how to improve coordination of government programming.

Seniors suggested that identifying a common office contact point or location for seniors' programs would provide simplicity for seniors and a central community focal point for seniors' affairs. However, it was noted that in order to accomplish this, a major consolidation of some or all of the government offices providing services to seniors would have to occur.

Another suggestion was that a single and consolidated application-form for seniors' programs be developed. It was suggested that this would reduce the number of times a senior would need to apply for programs and ideally decrease the number of times information would need to be recorded.
A general "identity card" using latest technology was seen as a possible way to enhance program access. Such a card could provide immediate information on all programs for both the client and the service provider. 'On-line' application procedures could be developed in association with a general identity card.

PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING

One of the key messages the Working Group heard from seniors during consultations was the need for government to listen to their concerns and ideas, and for government to include seniors in program design and planning. Seniors want to be involved in shaping the policies and programs that affect their lifestyles.

Over the years, seniors have advocated the establishment of a discrete and dedicated Ministry of Seniors. The Working Group considered the pros and cons of such an administrative unit. However, the feasibility of establishing a standalone ministry for 2800 residents is questionable. Seniors have also commented that they believe the current Minister Responsible for Seniors has no resources attached to the portfolio, and they questioned why the government has a Minister with no staff or funding, substantive mandate or general policy base. The working group noted that part of the solution to this issue requires better communications as a government.

PROGRAM CRITERIA

The Working Group examined a number of suggestions surrounding the application and eligibility for seniors' programs and services.

While some programs are universally available, eligibility for other programs is subject to income verification. It was noted that some GNWT departments use different income standards to assess client eligibility. The GNWT has a number of financial support type programs for seniors including:

- Seniors Home Heating Subsidy
- Seniors' Property Tax Rebate
- NWT Housing Corporation Programs: Senior Citizens Home Repair, Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program, and the Seniors Citizens and Disabled maintenance program
- Income Support
- Seniors Citizens Supplementary Benefit (note: the SCSB is tied to eligibility for the federal Guaranteed Income Supplement – if a senior is eligible for the GIS, they automatically receive the SCSB).

The GNWT has completed a project that identified ways in which the public housing and income assistance programs can work together more effectively and complement their program objectives. Additionally, the implementation of the new rent schedule for seniors living in Housing Corporation units is a first step in establishing greater equity and fairness in disparities between rental costs of the private market compared to the zero rent for seniors in the public housing system.

Seniors have consistently called for standardizing the age criteria of all GNWT programs. Currently, all programs except the Senior Citizens Supplementary Benefit, the Seniors' Property Tax Rebate, and Motor Vehicle Licensing have established age 60 as the age of eligibility.

The Government of the Northwest Territories has a number of programs that provide financial support to seniors in the NWT. During the consultations seniors who access these programs often stated that the rules that guide how a person accesses these financial supports were inconsistent across departments. This difference in eligibility is a point of frustration for seniors. Specific issues raised during the consultation are outlined below.

Income Support (Income Tested)

- Adequacy of income for seniors receiving only Canada Pension Plan (CPP) benefits, Old Age Security (OAS), the federal Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) and/or the NWT Senior Citizens Supplementary Benefit (SCSB).
- Financial supports do not reflect cost of living differences within the NWT nor general inflation.
- The government does not have standard cut-offs or thresholds for eligibility to different types of financial supports (eg, Seniors Home Heating Subsidy and Housing repair and maintenance programs).
- Problems with the Canada Pension Plan, especially applying for pensions, and reductions in pension income due to other earnings.
- The primary issue identified with Income Support involves the 'near senior' age group (50-64) who may be considered hard to employ. In this area, the Working Group heard comments that Productive Choices need to be more sensitive to the needs of this group.

Seniors Citizens Supplementary Benefit (Income tested and linked to federal Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS))

- Seniors were unaware of the GNWT portion or top-up to their pension income.
- Some seniors commented that the SSB was not enough.

Seniors' Property Tax Rebate (Available to all Seniors over 65 years who own their own homes)

- Seniors find this program very helpful and spoke well of its need and intent.
- Seniors expressed concern that either the GNWT or participating communities would back out of providing support to homeowners.

Seniors Home Heating Subsidy (Income Tested)

- Seniors liked this program and do not want to see it discontinued or cut back.
- Many seniors did not understand the 'volume' nature of the program and thought it was a direct cash subsidy that they could access.
- The current program design provides no financial support for seniors who have income above the income threshold. Seniors felt that some level of scaled or decreasing benefits would assist these seniors.
- Suggestions were made to have the amount of fuel available increased and reflect the differing lengths of heating season from region to region.
- It was noted that out of pockets costs for fuel purchased above the allotment impact heavily on seniors who are in their own homes.
- A few comments, in larger centres, that seniors in private rental accommodations are unfairly excluded from the program.

HOUSING ISSUES

Seniors expressed a wide range of concerns about housing. Many of their concerns focused on their personal dealings with the NWT Housing Corporation and its Local Housing Organizations. The following items relate to the housing issues identified by seniors:

- Lack of adequate housing in many communities;
- Affordability of private sector housing;
- Lack of fairness in level of government support between seniors in private accommodation and those in public housing;
- The need to incorporate more seniors friendly design principles in older homes.
- Current program design does not provide support for seniors who have income above income threshold established for housing programs.
- Seniors in older homes felt that the housing support programs did not address the costs of maintaining an older home.
- Seniors felt that they did not have current and relevant information about housing programs.

It was noted during the project that the housing challenge in the NWT affects society as a whole. Seniors are especially vulnerable to the dynamics of housing because they are often on low, fixed incomes and consequently have less purchasing and bargaining power in the private housing market. The housing issue for seniors is also complicated by the discrepancies between the current public housing rental scheme and the costs to maintain or rent a home in the private market.

Independent living and Housing Needs

Participants consistently stated that seniors want to remain independent – within their own homes and communities - for as long as possible. Seniors identified a number of critical items relating to programming that impact upon their ability to remain independent, including:

- Having adequate financial supports to remain in independent housing;
- Having access to program supports like Home Care;
- Having access to "seniors' friendly" living environments, especially in housing design;
- Having access to transportation in and around their communities.

HEALTH ISSUES

Seniors identified a number of general issues and interests related to the NWT health system. As well specific comments were offered regarding Extended Health Benefits (EHB) and Non-insured Health Benefits (NIHB) programs. As seniors are major users of the health system, they offered comments and suggestions. Major areas of concern identified included:

- Perceptions about differences between the EHB and NIHB;
- Difficulty in accessing specialists, especially for seniors in smaller communities;
- Lack of understanding about the medical escort policy, especially those seniors who require interpreters or who have low literacy levels in English;
- Lack of understanding of the purpose and level of service of home care programming in small communities.
- Lack of access to rehabilitation services.

Extended Health Benefits

- Some seniors noted that the EHB program is a good program and they indicated their desire that the government maintain the program for seniors;
- It was suggested that the rules guiding EHB are inconsistently applied, lack flexibility and/or are not adjusted to current costs;
- Seniors noted that out of pocket costs for eyeglasses, dental services, hearing aids, other aids and supplies, along with medical travel rates and pharmaceuticals/drugs, did not account for the fixed incomes of seniors;
- The benefits have not kept up with costs;
- The rules need to be reviewed.

Continuing Care Programs

- Seniors in small communities did not have a clear understanding about the services provided under the Home Care program;
- Seniors and caregivers felt that training for Home Care workers was critical;
- Seniors, caregivers and families identified the importance of having access to respite care;
- The issue of services for the cognitively impaired was discussed in a number of communities and in the submissions. Differing views were promoted in terms of approach to the matter.

Though seniors represent about 6% of the total population in the NWT, on average they require more health care than any other age group. Consequently, seniors collectively utilize the health system more than other segments of the population. This trend has implications for health care costs and system capacity for service delivery. The issue of sustainability of the overall health system will be the core planning issue facing seniors programs and services.

COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION, AND INFORMATION

Throughout the consultation process it was clear that there is a significant gap in communications about seniors programs and services to the public. A number of communication issues emerged including:

- Lack of information or difficulty in accessing information regarding specific programs, especially information on benefits, eligibility, etc;
- Misunderstandings and differences regarding the intent and purpose of government programming, especially in the home care and housing areas;
- Lack of general educational and public awareness information and materials on seniors' issues.

It was noted that the greater the collective understanding and awareness of aging and the social impacts of aging on the NWT, the greater the chances and options are for consistent and coherent programs and services. Education, information and the development of a positive social consciousness around the aging population could form a core or foundation for long term planning and public relations.

Seniors have identified the desire to have a consolidated point of contact for seniors' information. It was noted that a web site could be developed that would contain information such as program information including benefits, eligibility, etc; policy information; demographic information; Canada wide information on seniors; and special interest information. This database and information base as well could eventually be a platform for on-line applications process for programs and services.

The working group noted during their discussions that all governments in Canada have begun to consider the impacts of the aging population on their programs and services. Research and analysis currently underway focuses on the interface between population

growth and program delivery, primarily in the areas of health care, housing demand, and adequacy of income over the next 20 years.

The working group also received some comments regarding the seniors' toll-free information lines. Some seniors consider it difficult to reply to an answering machine, and would refrain from using the service. It was noted that the lack of aboriginal language service on the line may prevent some seniors from using the service. Seniors also expressed frustration when accessing information via toll free lines for federal government income support programs because they often received recorded messages or voice mail.

PLANNING AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

It became clear during the consultation process that planners of seniors programs are faced with the need to begin identifying a process for evaluating emerging trends and implications for seniors and seniors programming. Demographic trends on the aging population in the Northwest Territories necessitate a planned and thoughtful approach, both for short-term initiatives and long term planning.

Development of an overall policy framework represents a substantive approach to addressing consistency and relationships across the array of seniors' programs services. The Working Group has examined the development of a draft policy framework guide for seniors' program development.

OTHER ISSUES

During the consultations, seniors, caregivers and the general public provided information about other issues affecting the quality of life for seniors:

- As it is in the general population, the use, and abuse, of alcohol occurs amongst a portion of seniors in the NWT. This is a concern to many families and caregivers, and was raised in a number of communities;
- Seniors live in a changing world; their children often do not live in the same community nor with the same lifestyles as their parents lived; most family members are now involved in the wage economy and have less time to care for elderly family members;
- In addition, Aboriginal seniors in smaller communities seem to have a level of complexity to their lives that non-Aboriginal seniors don't have. This is evident in the way in which Aboriginal seniors straddle two cultures: traditional and modern;
- The issue of elders' abuse independently arose in almost every community consultation. Seniors, caregivers and the general public all identified the problem. The financial aspect of elders' abuse was most commonly identified but physical and emotional/psychological abuse was also discussed.

- As young Aboriginal persons become more integrated into the labour force, they end up spending less time with their parents and elders. Aboriginal seniors identified their frustration with such work arrangements because their children were no longer continually near them to provide daily support and assistance.
- The cost of the medical for seniors still driving commercially was identified as an issue.

WHAT ARE OUR RECOMMENDATIONS?

Based on the their initial review, the consultation meetings, the written submissions, and their analysis and observations, the Working Group have made a series of recommendations. These recommendations focus on those programs and services where there are opportunities to enhance coordination, streamline processes, harmonize activities, or fill in identified gaps in current service.

DEPARTMENTAL COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

Recommendation 1 - Organization and administration of programs

The Working Group recommends that the GNWT identify options for organizing and administering seniors' programs within government, including:

- The feasibility and implications of establishing a single point of entry at the community level, through technology and/or physical location;
- The feasibility and implications for consolidating all or some seniors' programs into one administrative unit;
- The feasibility and implications of establishing a universal identification card and a single application form for seniors' programs.

Recommendation 2 - Coordination at the community level

The Working Group recommends that, where practical in a community, GNWT departments work in conjunction with appropriate organizations and service providers to establish community seniors' coordinating committees with the mandate of providing better inter-departmental and agency coordination and services to seniors. The committees would meet as required, to discuss issues of importance to seniors in the community. The committees would be chaired by a representative from the Department of Health and Social Services. Any reports, information or recommended actions arising from the work of the community seniors' planning committees would be forwarded to GNWT departments and to appropriate community organizations and local governments.

PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING

Recommendation 3 - Departmental coordination

The Working Group recommends that the GNWT strengthen the interdepartmental approach through the Minister Responsible for Seniors by establishing a committee of officials for seniors' programs and services. The mandate of the committee is to ensure that seniors' programs and services are coordinated across the GNWT and that an inter-departmental approach is used by staff when addressing cross government seniors' issues and programs.

Recommendation 4 - Seniors' Forum

The Working Group recommends the GNWT support the organization of a 'Seniors' Forum' once during the term of each assembly.

Recommendation 5 - Review of programs and services

The Working Group recommends that the GNWT conduct a comprehensive review of Seniors' Programs and Services once during the term of each assembly.

SENIORS ELIGIBILITY

Recommendation 6 - Income assessment

The Working Group recommends that based on the outcomes of the Public Housing-Income Assistance Harmonization Project, departments adopt standard criteria for assessing and determining eligibility for government programs.

The Working Group further recommends that a scale of graduated benefits be adapted for GNWT income tested seniors' programs, where appropriate.

Recommendation 7 - Standardized age of eligibility

The Working Group recognizes that Seniors have requested that the age of 60 should become the standard age for accessing all GNWT programs and services for Seniors. The Working Group also recognizes that significant cost implications could result from standardizing all programs to age 60. Based on the analysis detailed in this report, the Working Group recommends the GNWT not lower the age of eligibility to 60 years, in the following programs: Seniors Citizens Supplementary Benefit; Seniors Property Tax Rebate; and Motor Vehicle Licensing.

INCOME ISSUES

Recommendation 8 - Consolidation of income support programs

The Working Group recommends that the GNWT complete the analysis for the proposal to consolidate all income-tested financial supports into one single payment and administration system.

Recommendation 9 - Inflation

The Working Group recommends that income thresholds for seniors' financial/income supports reflect differences within the NWT in the Cost of Living, and cost increases due to inflation, by adjusting periodically to the Consumer Price Index. The Seniors Citizens Supplementary Benefit will be included in these periodic adjustments.

Recommendation 10 - Adequacy of Income

Adequacy of income in a person's later years is an important issue for many seniors in the NWT. Levels of income vary greatly between community size, and seniors in the larger communities, who have had longer employment paths than those in the small communities, may have prepared more extensively for their retirement. However, territorial income statistics indicate that many elderly persons in the smaller communities are living and surviving on minimal, fixed levels of income. The income levels of elderly widowed women are of special concern to the Working Group and this review. Additionally, the poorest of our elderly people are often residing in the communities and regions that experience higher costs of living.

The Working Group recommends the GNWT investigate the adequacy of income for seniors, focusing on:

- The immediate financial concerns of seniors in need.
- Comparative levels of income and income supports across the country;
- Implications of the differences in income among seniors across the NWT, including cost of living issues;
- Forecasting the levels of retirement income for the next generation of seniors; and
- The applicability of adapting other systems or models of income support in the NWT (eg, including minimum and/or guaranteed income levels);

Recommendation 11 - Seniors Home Heating Subsidy

The Working Group recommends that the Seniors' Home Heating Subsidy be reviewed annually and adjusted to account for length of the heating season by community. Further, the GNWT investigate the merit of consolidating all shelter benefits for residents living in private accommodation, who are deemed in need.

HOUSING ISSUES

Recommendation 12 - Independent living and Housing Needs

The Working Group recommends the GNWT identify a long-term strategy, with public and private sector collaboration, for addressing the supply of Seniors Independent Living options.

Recommendation 13 - Housing repair and maintenance

The Working Group recommends that the GNWT improve seniors' awareness and accessibility to government assisted home repair and maintenance programs and options in order to promote the principle of Seniors Independent Living. Further, the repair and maintenance programs of the NWT Housing Corporation be reviewed on a periodic basis.

HEALTH ISSUES

Recommendation 14 - Continuing Care framework

The Working Group recommends that the Continuing Care Framework currently being developed by the GNWT include:

Home care: Use of First Nations and Inuit Home and Community Care Initiative to enhance Home care services to all NWT residents. This includes the communication of program information and the continued training of home care workers.

Long term care: Current and future needs for long term care and respite services to enable the elderly to stay in their homes, or those of their families, for as long as possible.

The cognitively impaired: A program of support for families, spouses, and other persons when the cognitively impaired are living at home. Additionally, the GNWT examine options for housing the cognitively impaired.

Rehabilitation services: Increased access to physiological, occupational and other medical and rehabilitative services and specialists, based on need for all ages.

Palliative care: Develop and provide information, training and support to families, caregivers, and the general public regarding end-of-life issues for all ages.

Recommendation 15 – Extended Health Benefits

The Working Group recommends the GNWT review the benefits currently within the Extended Health Benefits program, and, further, recommends adjustment to the following components of the EHB program, if and when appropriate:

- Medical Travel Benefits
- Medical Escorts
- Medical supplies, devices, and aids

COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

Recommendation 16 - Communication and information

The Working Group recommends the GNWT enhance the current approaches departments use to communicate and inform seniors and the public about programs, services, and activities relevant to seniors in the Northwest Territories.

Recommendation 17 - Seniors' database

The Working Group recommends that the GNWT support the establishment of a website of seniors' information. The website will include program and service information, demographic information, national linkages, and any relevant information for seniors in the NWT.

Recommendation 18 – Elder Abuse

The Working Group acknowledges that abuse of older adults is an issue in the Northwest Territories and recommends that, as a priority, the GNWT support a public awareness campaign to be implemented and delivered in collaboration with the NWT Seniors' Society and/or other appropriate organizations. The public awareness campaign on the abuse of elderly persons in the NWT may include community-based workshops and educational and informational materials. Workshops should be delivered at the readiness and request of the community. The Working Group also suggests that the GNWT specifically include and/or cite the protection of elderly persons in the development of any future Protection Against Family Violence legislation.

Recommendation 19 - Seniors-friendly workshops

Knowledge of the lifestyle issues seniors face is a critical piece of the way society in general understands and responds to our elderly population. *Seniors-Friendly* educational workshops and information are a way to sensitize and educate the general population to the needs of NWT seniors. The Working Group recommends that the GNWT continue to support the NWT Seniors Society to deliver 'Senior Friendly' workshops, and that the workshops be delivered in the schools of the NWT and within the public and private sectors.

Recommendation 20 - Retirement planning

Pre-retirement and retirement planning can have a positive influence on the lives of future seniors. As such, the Working Group recommends that the GNWT develop an education and public awareness program focusing on retirement planning issues.

Recommendation 21 - Consolidation of toll free lines

The Working Group recommends that the GNWT and the NWT Seniors' Society examine the feasibility of consolidating the toll free numbers currently used by Seniors to contact government regarding programs and services.

Recommendation 22 – Research

The Working Group recommends that the GNWT continue to conduct research into issues affecting seniors programming and quality of life, including but not limited to:

- The nature of demographic change in the NWT and its impacts on programming;
- Innovative program delivery models; and
- Other program planning issues requiring research.

PLANNING AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Recommendation 23 - Program principles

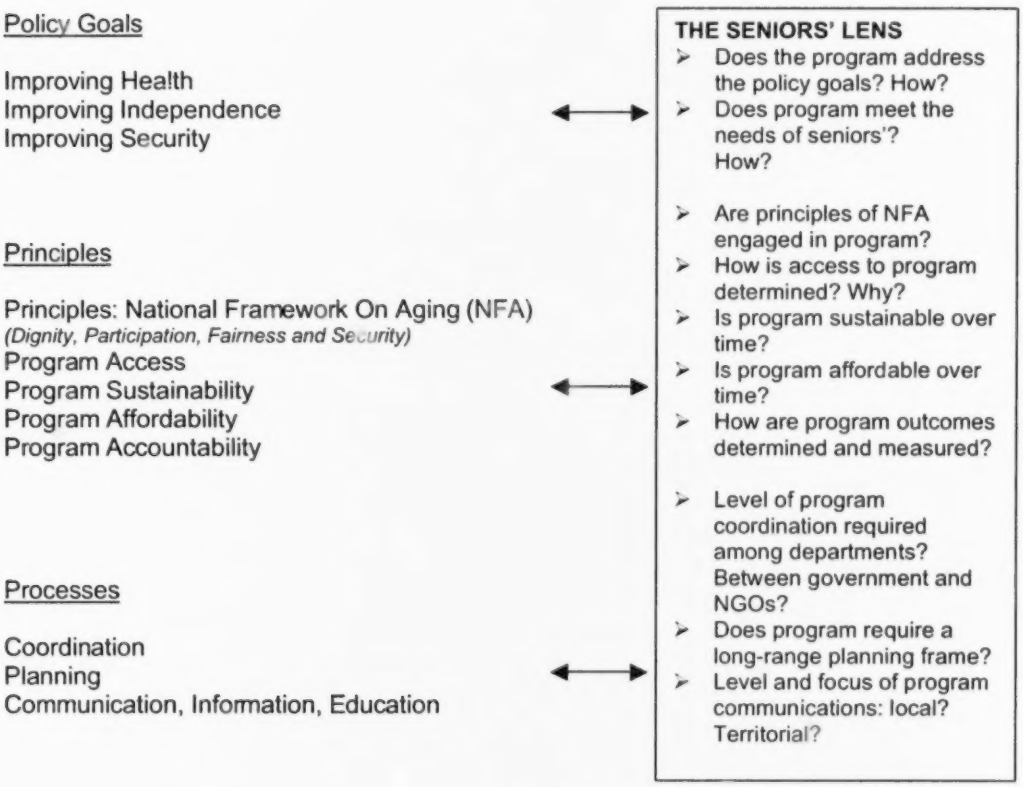
The Working Group recommends that the GNWT incorporate the principles of the National Framework on Aging (NFA) into a policy framework for seniors' programs and services:

- *Dignity*...Being treated with respect, regardless of the situation
- *Independence*...Being in control of one's life; being able to do as much for oneself as possible
- *Participation*...Getting involved, staying active and taking part in the community
- *Fairness*...Having Seniors' real needs, in all their diversity, considered equally to those of other Canadians
- *Security*...Having adequate income as one ages, and having access to a safe and supportive living environment

Recommendation 24 - Policy framework

The Working Group recommends that the GNWT adapt a policy framework to the development of seniors programs, as outlined in the following model:

A Policy Framework for Seniors' Programs and Services


Policy Goals
Improving Health
Improving Independence
Improving Security
Principles
Principles: National Framework On Aging (NFA)
(Dignity, Participation, Fairness and Security)
Program Access
Program Sustainability
Program Affordability
Program Accountability
Processes
Coordination
Planning
Communication, Information, Education
THE SENIORS' LENS
Does the program address the policy goals? How?
Does program meet the needs of seniors'? How?
Are principles of NFA engaged in program?
How is access to program determined? Why?
Is program sustainable over time?
Is program affordable over time?
How are program outcomes determined and measured?
Level of program coordination required among departments? Between government and NGOs?
Does program require a long-range planning frame?
Level and focus of program communications: local? Territorial?

Other Issues

Recommendation 25 - Employment

The Working Group recommends that the GNWT identify solutions to the employment and lifestyle problems experienced by some seniors in the NWT, and those approaching their senior years who have difficulty maintaining employment.

Recommendation 26 - Volunteerism

The Working Group recommends that the GNWT continue to work with community organizations to encourage the role of volunteerism in communities and to enhance the participation of all members of society in supporting elderly persons.

Recommendation 27 - Community participation

The Working Group recommends that GNWT departments increase their collaboration with the NWT Seniors Society and other existing seniors' organizations to identify ways to include and integrate seniors into the affairs and life of the community and society within which they reside. Further, the Working Group recommends the importance for all concerned parties to identify and fund transportation options in those communities where transportation is a barrier to seniors participating in the activities of daily living.

Recommendation 28 – Transportation

The Working Group recommends the importance for all concerned parties to identify and fund transportation options in those communities where transportation is a barrier to seniors participating in the activities of daily living.

CONCLUSION

The review of seniors programs and services represents an inclusive and participatory activity. Though the Terms of Reference did not task the Working Group with identifying major program renewal, the overall results of the analysis and the consultations indicate that current programs do not require major overhaul nor organizational change. The report and recommendations do identify a number of opportunities for streamlining current programs and providing a better approach to coordinating the existing set of government programs. Seniors' programs and services across government need to complement and align their goals and objectives in a closer manner. The need for coordinated communications around seniors' programs and services has been identified as a major gap in current programming.

Research, analysis, planning and policy development are necessary tools for the cohesive development of seniors' programming within each department and sector and across the broad array of programs.

Responsive programming that meets the needs of seniors does not and will not happen on its own. In order to ensure that the needs of seniors, today and tomorrow, are addressed, government must establish a long term planning frame that is inclusive of participation from the non-government sector and the public at large. The Government of the Northwest Territories must also ensure that it coordinates its own work internally to ensure that the same outcomes of effective, sustainable programs are constantly kept in sight.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: TERMS OF REFERENCE

APPENDIX B: LIST OF COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS AND SUBMISSIONS

APPENDIX C: DISCUSSION OF KEY PROGRAMS AND POLICY ISSUES

APPENDIX D: STATISTICAL PROFILE OF SENIORS IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

APPENDIX E: LIST OF GNWT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

APPENDIX B

COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS AND SUBMISSIONS

Community Consultations

- Hay River – May 3, 2001
- Tuktoyaktuk – May 8, 2001
- Inuvik – May 9, 2001
- Norman Wells – May 10, 2001
- Fort Rae – May 15, 2001
- Fort Simpson – May 22-23, 2001
- Fort Smith – May 24-25, 2001
- Fort Resolution – May 29, 2001
- Yellowknife – May 30, 2001
- Fort Providence – June 6, 2001
- Aklavik- June 15, 2001

Submissions Received

12 Written submissions were received

DISCUSSION OF KEY PROGRAM AND POLICY ISSUES

The GNWT has two types of programming for seniors: universal and specific programs. Universal programming for seniors means that seniors access the same service as the rest of the population. The NWT Health Care Plan is an example of a universal program. It is intended for the general population, though seniors are a large user group. The GNWT also has some programming specifically directed and targeted for seniors. The Seniors Home Heating Subsidy is an example. Only seniors can access this type of programming. It is important to understand this distinction when considering the scope of seniors programs and services.

Seniors are looking for simplified access procedures when applying for government programming. At present even in small communities, seniors must go to different government offices and meet with different staff to apply for programs, to access programs, or to receive program information.

In this multi-faceted service environment, the Working Group examined potential ways to improve and/or streamline the current set of programs.

The Working Group was asked to identify ways to streamline and simplify programs and services for seniors. This included reviewing and assessing:

1. Current application procedures for consistency and simplicity
2. Program eligibility criteria for consistency and simplicity including age, residency, portability, and income testing
3. Options for program integration
4. The potential of establishing a seniors' informational data base
5. A process for evaluating emerging trends and implications for seniors and seniors programming.

Application procedures

The Working Group examined a number of ways to simplify the application procedures of seniors' programs and services. These included developing a single, consolidated application form, and establishing a single point of program application and/or access in communities to seniors programs. A basic question was asked in addressing this task: can a common application form be developed and/or a single community location be used to apply for programs?

Single application form

A single and consolidated "application form for seniors" could assist applicants by reducing the number of times an application would need to be filed. Ideally it could also reduce the number of times information would need to be recorded, assuming that the single application form

would create a single client data and information base. All departments, then, could use the generic information and then be able to overlay or apply their specific program information to their part of the application form.

The Working Group analyzed current application forms with specific reference to the types of information required. The most obvious difficulty in developing a single application form lies in the fields of information required for the particular program and the nature of the confidentiality of the information. For example, applying for Housing Corporation programs requires client income information linked to CMHC requirements, whereas Home Care requires information derived from a client assessment.

These are two very different sets of information. Outside of name, address and age, the information required by departments varies differently and the confidentiality of client information, especially personal information on health and income, is a legal requirement in many areas. Consequently, other than for the purpose of collecting generic information on the client, a common or single, consolidated application form does not seem to be administratively efficient or viable at this time.

Single point of contact

Another approach to simplification of the application process at the community level could be to identify a common office, or contact point or location for seniors' programs. In order to accomplish this, however, a major consolidation of some or all of the government offices providing services to seniors would have to occur at the community level.

That is, all seniors programs delivered in any GNWT office or through an agent, would need to be brought together physically under one roof. While it is possible to co-locate some programs, the Working Group considered it too difficult to consolidate health, housing and financial support programs under one roof. Health treatment occurs in a highly specialized location, a nursing centre or hospital, while housing maintenance programs are delivered on-site. Availability of infrastructure is also an issue.

However, opportunities are possible to better organize and coordinate seniors' programs locally. Under the current public housing and income support harmonization project, co-location of housing and income support programs represent a move in the direction of one-stop shopping and provide a more streamlined service to seniors. Consolidation or integration of all financial supports into one department and administrative function would further streamline program access at the community level.

As well, government and communities have supported inter-agency type relationships at the community level, and certainly, relationships and collaborative efforts like this can work for seniors' programming.

Universal identity card

Though the analysis of the Working Group suggested that a single consolidated application form or a single consolidated community office would not be feasible, the Working Group also considered the merits of other approaches to simplification of the application procedure. The development of a "smart card' or "general identity card" is one area worth considering.

A general "identity card" using latest technology could enhance program access by providing immediate information on all programs for both the client and the service provider. A general identity card could expand on information cards like Pharmacard and provide a single point of entry for information on a client and/or program. The client and the program delivery agent, then, could have access to client and program specific information instantly and universally across the NWT. 'On-line' application procedures could be developed in association with a general identity card.

Two major factors require careful study and consideration for the development of the smart card to occur: confidentiality of client information and system development. In order for a general identity card to work across all government programs and services, security of information would be necessary to protect before any computerized general identity system could be implemented. Seniors, like all members of the public, want to know that their personal health and financial information is confidential and not available openly on the system.

The time frame to develop a smart card system could take up to 5 years but technological advances in the security of information might facilitate a quicker development. Essentially, the development of "seniors' smart cards" would require the establishment of a new client identifier number. The current health insurance number cannot be used as a general client identifier due to confidentiality around personal health information. The Social Insurance Number (SIN) cannot be used as a general client identifier because of federal law. Consequently, the development of a general identity card in the NWT – be it for a client group like seniors or for the general public – will require the establishment of a new (universal) client numbering system. In addition to the identification system, a general

identity card would require the development of a consolidated program and/or client information base prior to the implementation of the cards. Government would have to decide what level of data would be contained in the databases in addition to ensuring confidentiality. Once this is accomplished the original problems identified with a single point of entry are solved through a new general identity card.

Eligibility criteria

The Working Group examined the eligibility criteria for all programs and services specifically provided for seniors, with the purpose of determining if the criteria were duplicative or redundant, and whether service could be improved through harmonizing the eligibility criteria.

The following observations were made on general criteria used to determine eligibility:

Residency

Although residency is a factor generally for obtaining access to universal programs like territorial health insurance, residency is not an overriding feature of NWT seniors' programs. Waiting periods for obtaining residency for out-of-territory new residents can vary among programs but these waiting periods are consistent with those imposed by other jurisdictions. The high demand for housing in NWT communities requires local housing authorities in some instances to establish residency guidelines for access to public housing units giving priority to local residents first.

Mobility is associated with residency. The mobility of Canadians is protected and supported in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Seniors are moving in and out of the Northwest Territories – those seniors who move into the NWT do so primarily to be with their family members. Though the Working Group did not review issues associated to the mobility of seniors, it is worth noting that this trend is statistically an item that the GNWT Bureau of Statistics can monitor.

Income testing

While some programs, like health insurance, are universally available, eligibility for other programs is subject to an income verification. This fits with the general principle used by jurisdictions across the country in the provision of financial supports, that income assistance is primarily meant to meet and provide for basic need. Consequently, income testing is seen as a necessary tool for government to use to determine eligibility. This said, GNWT departments use different income standards to assess client

eligibility. The GNWT has a number of income or financial support type programs for seniors:

- Seniors Home Heating Subsidy
- Seniors' Property Tax Rebate
- NWT Housing Corporation Programs: Senior Citizens Home Repair, Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program, and the Seniors Citizens and Disabled maintenance program (introduced Spring 2001).
- Income Support (note: there are few seniors on Income Support)
- Seniors' Supplementary Benefit (note: the SSB is tied to eligibility for the federal Guaranteed Income Supplement – if a senior is eligible for the GIS, they automatically receive the SSB).

These programs utilize a range of different income tests and thresholds to determine eligibility. Housing Corporation income criteria are linked to and must be compatible with legislated Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation criteria. The Seniors Supplementary Benefit is linked to the Federal Guaranteed Income Supplement program. The Seniors Home Heating Subsidy is based on income verification and three income zones reflective of cost of living differences across the NWT. The Seniors Property Tax Rebate program has a legislated basis (being over 65 years of age and a homeowner) for determining eligibility.

Given that governments will continue to use income testing as a way of determining program eligibility, it may be appropriate to explore the potential for short-term and long-term harmonization of eligibility criteria.

<u>Standardized age – The 'age 60 issue'</u>

Many seniors, and seniors groups have consistently called for standardizing the age criteria of all GNWT programs.

Currently, all programs except the Seniors Supplementary Benefit, the Seniors' Property Tax Rebate, and Motor Vehicle Licensing have established age 60 as the age of eligibility. What would be the impacts of standardizing the age of eligibility for all programs?

First, it is important to establish the number of people who would become eligible under a universal age 60 system. Bureau of Statistics data show that in year 2000 there were 944 persons in the age 60-64 category in the NWT.[1] If the GNWT were to lower the age of eligibility to age 60, the programs would be affected, as shown in the Table. Essentially, there would be approximately 950 new clients, or a portion thereof, eligible for benefits under these programs.

Given the increased size of the client base, annual program costs (high estimate) would be in the nature of $1.7 million dollars with approximately 10% increase in the population annually. Given that such growth would need to be considered in current health, income and housing programming, it does not appear to be feasible to add an additional $1.7 million to current program funding to lower these three programs to age 60, especially at a time when the impacts of the aging population on program development and growth are not yet clearly understood.

Another factor also impacts upon the age 60 issue. There is an observable statistical trend towards more seniors living longer and residing in the north after retirement. This trend will have an impact in a number of ways, but will especially impact housing and health programming, by adding to the total client base. As noted previously, provincial-territorial mobility may also become a factor as seniors move to the NWT to be nearer their families.

Program integration

The Working Group reviewed the current methods utilized for seniors to access programs. Generally programs are accessed by two main methods: personal contact with a service or an in-person visit to an office. (Electronic access in many communities is still undeveloped in most program areas). In many instances, these two are one and the same. A number of factors need to be considered with respect to accessing seniors programs, including the:

- Importance of personal contact between client and service provider;
- Language and literacy skills of the client and service provider;
- Level of program offered at community, regional or territorial level;
- Ability of the client to use technology.

[1] GNWT Bureau of Statistics, February 2001: Population Estimates by Age, Sex, and Ethnicity

The Working Group considered that the co-location of similar offices would provide the greatest potential to improving access to programs, though there is an obvious difficulty in co-locating non-health programs and offices with the health delivery system.

The Working Group was tasked with the challenge of identifying options for program harmonization and integration. Current cross-government initiatives provide a first step in the process of streamlining seniors programs and services.

Continuing care framework

The Department of Health and Social Services is currently reviewing and re-designing the government's continuing care programming. The purpose of the program renewal is to ensure that all of the programs and services that form the suite of continuing care programs are designed with the principles of sustainability and long term planning.

The Working Group was mandated to incorporate or accommodate current government initiatives aimed at streamlining and harmonizing programs and recognizes the importance of the development of the continuing care framework.

Public Housing and Income Assistance Harmonization initiative

The Government of the Northwest Territories has completed a project which identified ways in which the public housing and income assistance programs can more effectively work together and complement their program objectives. Recommendations from the Seniors Review complement the work of the Harmonization project, especially the work focusing on assessment of income and co-location of office facilities. Additionally, the implementation of the new rent schedule is a first step in establishing greater equity and fairness in disparities between rents costs of the private market compared to the zero rent for seniors in the public housing system.

Integrating financial supports

The Government of the Northwest Territories has a number of programs that provide financial support to seniors in the NWT. The programs include the Seniors Supplementary Benefit, Seniors Home Heating Subsidy, Seniors Property Tax Rebate, and the housing maintenance and repair programs for seniors who own their own homes.

During the consultations seniors who access these programs often stated that the 'rules' that guide how a person accesses these financial supports were inconsistent across departments. For example, the income thresholds established by the Income Support program operated by Education, Culture and Employment for the heating subsidy are different than the income thresholds established by the NWT Housing Corporation for the repair and maintenance programs. Consequently, a senior who accesses the heating subsidy may not be able to access the repair or maintenance program because their income exceeds the threshold for that program, or vice versa.

The administration of financial support programs requires consideration. The government essentially administers these financial supports to a single client from three different departments. The administration of some of these programs could realistically be integrated at the headquarters level, with the intended effect of decreasing the paperwork at the client/community level, along with harmonizing the income eligibility. This possibility complements the work that has been done in the Public Housing and Income Support Harmonization project.

The Working Group reviewed the potential for program integration in the area of financial supports. Although it is not feasible to consolidate all seniors programming into a single department or administrative unit, it may be feasible for the government to consider integrating to as great a degree as possible, financial supports to seniors. This would include:

- Incorporating the complementary work of the Public Housing/Income Support Harmonization project, especially the work focusing on income assessment and co-location of offices;
- Standardizing, where feasible, income thresholds across departments;
- Commencing work on the development of a single financial support accounting/administration system. One of the outcomes of this work would be the consolidation of financial supports a client receives into one income statement.

These initiatives are complementary and would require a concerted effort in their development. All of the above could complement the development of a general identity card, which has been discussed previously. However, the most promising potential and outcome for integrating financial supports is that it would act as the catalyst for streamlining delivery of income and housing supports at the community level.

Ministry for Seniors

Since the 1997 Report on Seniors Programs and Services, seniors have advocated the establishment of a discrete and dedicated Ministry of Seniors. The Working Group considered the pros and cons of such an administrative unit.

Currently, there are approximately 2800 persons 60 years of age or older in the NWT. On average, the population of seniors will grow annually by about 250 persons over the next twenty years. All GNWT departments are mandated to deliver programs to the entire public, and consequently, there are no GNWT departments that have a specific social sector group as its client base for program delivery. The feasibility of establishing a standalone ministry for 2800 residents is questionable. Other social sectors and NGOs as well are interested in obtaining greater presence in public programming. The feasibility of establishing stand-alone ministries for a number of social sector groups is further questioned.

Other provincial and territorial jurisdictions in Canada facilitate the coordination and administration of seniors' programs in a variety of ways. Most jurisdictions have sizeable populations and a critical mass of seniors, and have established "seniors' secretariats" with the primary function to coordinate programming among government departments. Ontario and British Columbia are two examples of this approach. Nunavut has grouped seniors in with youth for the purpose of achieving broad cultural outcomes (Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth) but has not included Income Support, housing or health programming in this administrative arrangement. There is no clear designation of seniors programming in the Yukon government. The Province of Alberta has recently re-organized its seniors' programming and established a Ministry of Seniors. This department is composed of income and housing support programs – health programming remains with the Department of Health. In summary, there is no clear pattern or precedent across Canada for administering seniors' programs.

Seniors suggest in their submissions that the current Minister Responsible for Seniors has no resources attached to the portfolio, and they question why the government has a Minister with no staff or funding, substantive mandate or general policy base. While this perception holds, the government has directed staff and resources to address a number of the issues identified as of importance to seniors.

Seniors certainly have spoken to their interest in having government better organize itself around its seniors' programming. In considering its recommendation, the Working Group does not consider a stand-alone ministry a viable or feasible option at this time, but recognized the need for better organization and coordination of seniors programming.

Information on Programs and Services

The 1997 Report on Seniors' programs and Services recommended the establishment of a seniors' information and data base. During the current review, seniors also identified the desire to have a consolidated point of contact of seniors' information. A database of this type could take the shape of a web site, which in itself would be a depository of information and a reference and linking point for seniors' information. A web site could contain information such as program information including benefits, eligibility, etc; policy information; demographic information; Canada wide information on seniors; and special interest information. This database and information base as well could eventually be a platform for on-line applications. Most jurisdictions in Canada have some level of web site development for their seniors programming, aimed at providing a quick link and access to program information.

Evaluating emerging trends

In many parts of Canada the aging society and the delivery of programs for seniors have received a good deal of attention, but as a demographic phenomenon it has only begun to attract notice in the Northwest Territories. Seniors in the NWT certainly are aware of the aging society and their involvement and interest in the review and the results of the review are significant. As we look ahead, a number of factors and trends will require research and analysis.

The need for ongoing research

All governments in Canada have begun to consider the impacts of the aging population on their programs and services. Analysis of population growth on future programs and services must accommodate and contemplate a planning frame of at least twenty years. Research and analysis will focus on the interface between population growth and program delivery, primarily in the areas of health care, housing demand, and adequacy of income.

Focus on health care

Though seniors represent about 6% of the total population in the NWT, they, on average, require more health care than any other age group. Consequently, seniors collectively utilize the health system more than any other segment of the population. This trend has serious implications for health care costs and system capacity for service delivery. The issue of sustainability of the overall health system will be the core planning issue facing seniors programs and services.

The housing challenge

The housing challenge in the NWT affects society as a whole. Seniors are especially vulnerable to the dynamics of housing because they are on low, fixed incomes and consequently have less purchasing and bargaining power in the private housing market. There is no indication over the long term that the government will be able to build and supply public housing for seniors to meet growth in the demand.

Seniors want to live independently for as long as possible. One of the primary planning and policy challenges to seniors' programming over the next two decades will be to find affordable housing for seniors. The housing challenge is doubly difficult because of the housing deficit the current private and public markets face. Meeting current demand must happen prior to our ability to meet forecasted demand.

The housing issue for seniors is also complicated by the discrepancies between the current public housing rental scheme and the costs to maintain or rent a home in the private market. If the government's policy approach is to promote independent living in concert with the private market, then government is faced with the challenge of finding innovative ways to support seniors in private housing.

Financial support

Over the next two decades planning issues around income and other financial supports will center on the issue of adequacy of income. Will seniors in the NWT have enough income to meet their basic needs, and how much income is enough to meet those basic needs? Two parts of this issue will require research and analysis: one, identifying the level of income that the current baby boomers will retire with, and, two, the way in which government financial supports are structured to promote seniors' independent living.

The value of education, information and awareness

The greater the collective understanding and awareness of aging and the social impacts of aging on the NWT, the greater the chances and options are for consistent and coherent programs and services. Education, information and the development of a positive social consciousness around the aging population could form a core or foundation for long term planning and public relations.

Planning and policy development

Demographic trends on the aging population in the Northwest Territories necessitate a planned and thoughtful approach, both for short-term initiatives and long term planning. Program and policy development require a collaborative effort among government departments. As government considers how best to develop policy and programming for seniors, a number of key issues must be addressed including:

- Need for long term planning process;
- The establishment of a government wide policy framework;
- Complexity of seniors programming, especially in relation to universal programs;
- Issue of program sustainability over the long term;
- Need for ongoing research and analysis in seniors programming;
- Importance of communications and information.

The establishment of a comprehensive policy framework for seniors' programs could help to ensure greater consistency in program design and operation.

Statistical Profile of Seniors in the Northwest Territories

David Stewart
NWT Bureau of Statistics
April 10, 2001

APPENDIX D:

Statistical Profile of NWT Seniors

Purpose is to provide a brief overview of seniors in the Northwest Territories.

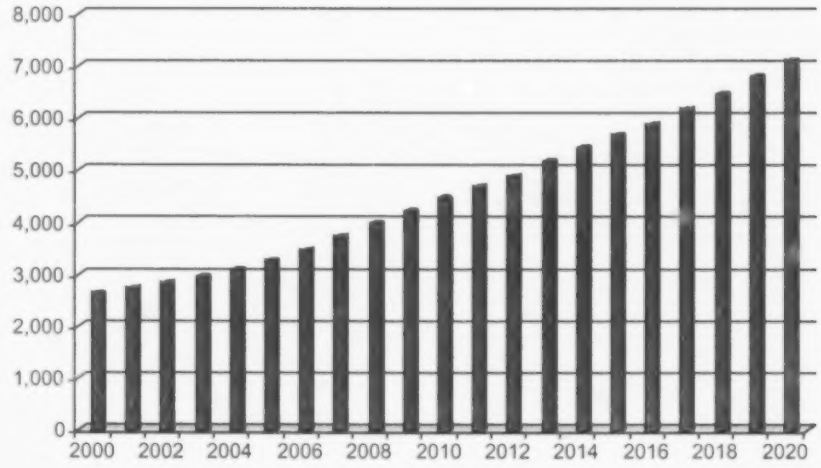
Statistical information can be used for a number of purposes, including:

- Planning for program requirements;
- Advocacy with governments and others;
- Background information for other types of analysis.

The general role of statistics within most public agencies is as follows:

Good Information + Sound Judgment = Good Decisions

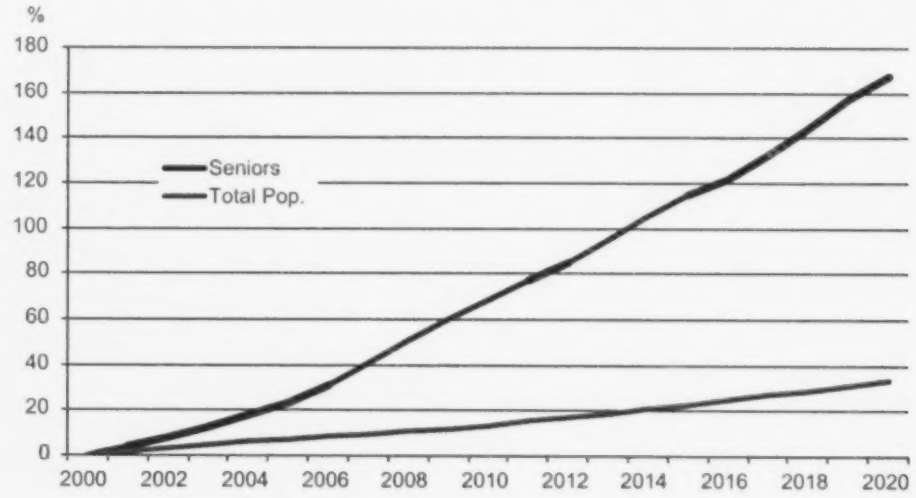
Population Change for NWT Seniors



Largest single change for Seniors in the NWT is the rapid increase in numbers that is happening.

Total number of seniors (60+) is expected to top 7,000 in 20 years.

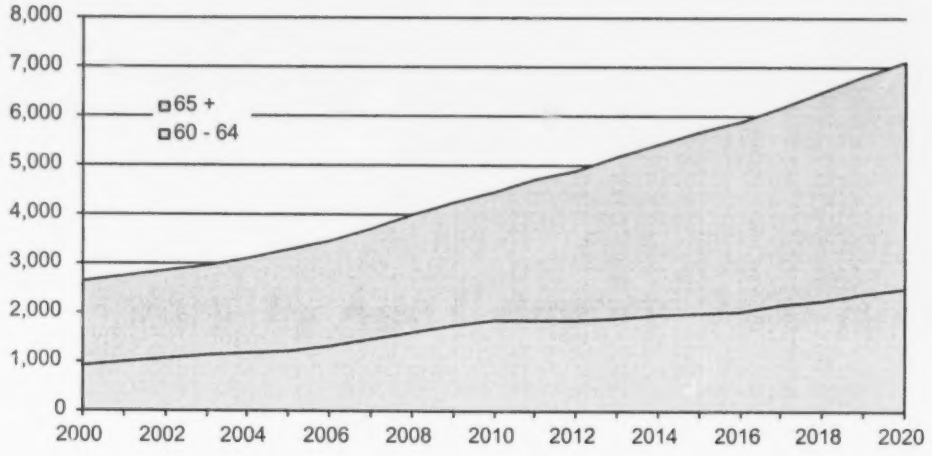
Percent Change in Population: 2000-2020



Rate of increase among the Senior population, far outstrips rate for total population.

Growth is across all communities.

Seniors, by Age Category: 2000-2020



Seniors defined as 65 and over, will number about 4,600 in 20 years.

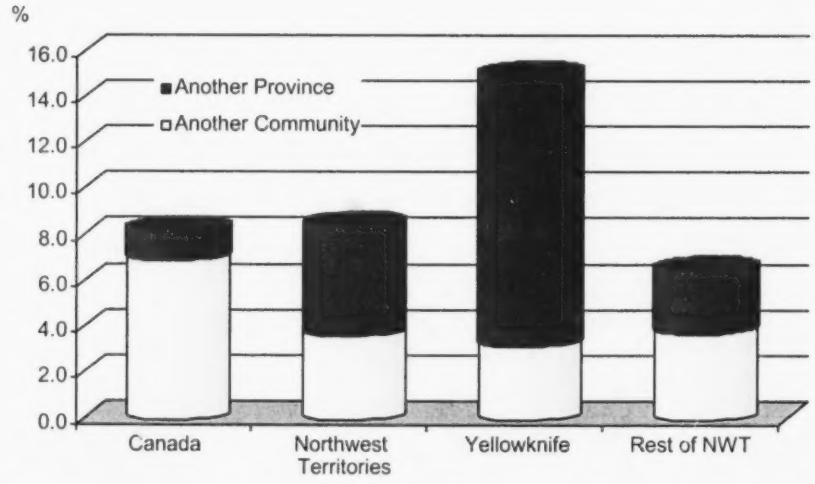
The 60 to 64 year olds, will represent about 35% of all seniors throughout the period.

Other Indicators for NWT Seniors

The following are some indicators of socio-economic circumstance for NWT seniors.

These slides are not exhaustive, but rather provide some highlights that may be useful when considering Seniors programs.

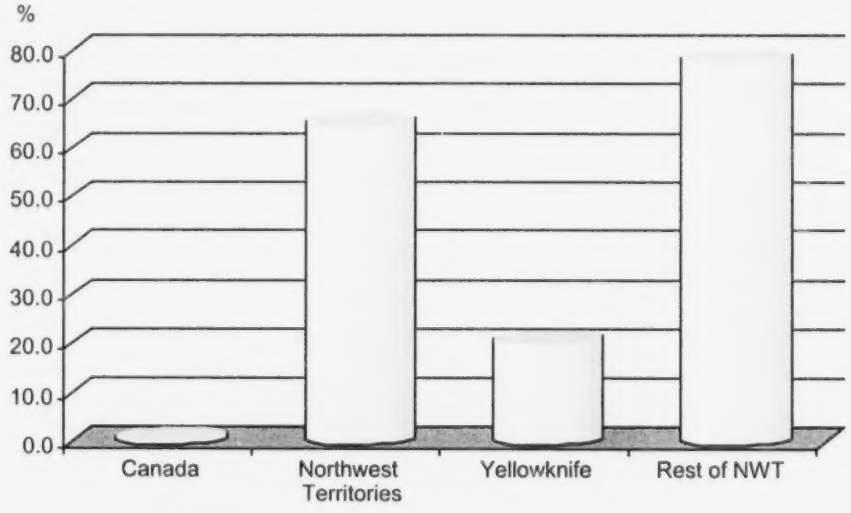
Mobility and Migration Among Seniors



Overall, similar to Canada, about 8% of NWT Seniors lived in a different community 5 years ago.

For Yellowknife, this number is higher and many come from a different province.

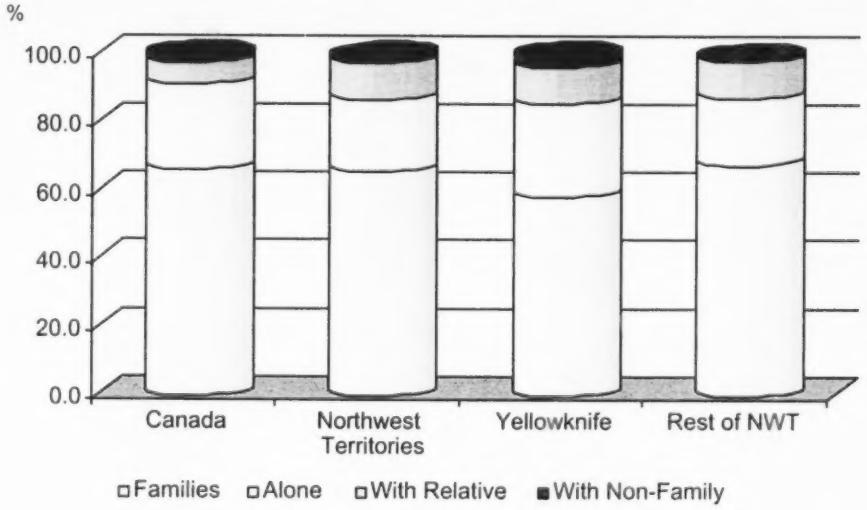
Percent Aboriginal in Population



Overall about 65% of NWT seniors are aboriginal persons.

In Yellowknife, some 20% of Seniors are aboriginal. In smaller NWT communities the value is about 78%

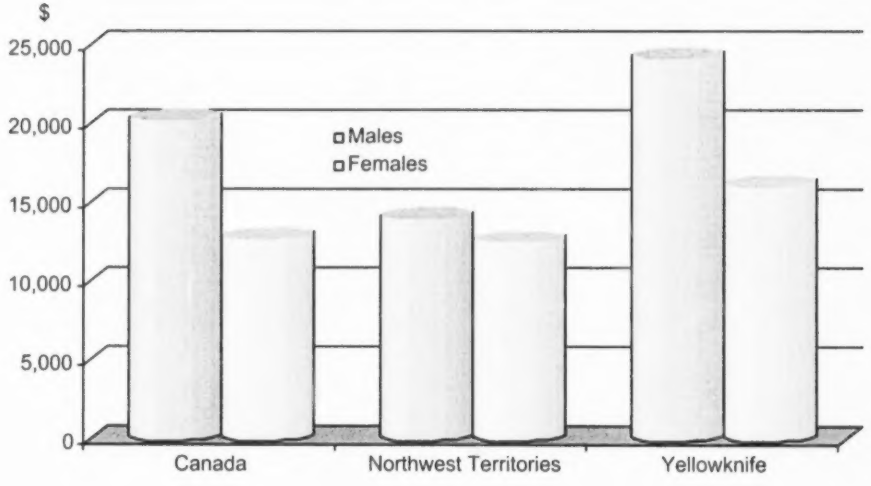
Percent Distribution of Family Structure



About 66% of all Seniors live as part of a family in the NWT, which is similar to Canada.

In Yellowknife the number is lower, with most other living alone or with other family members.

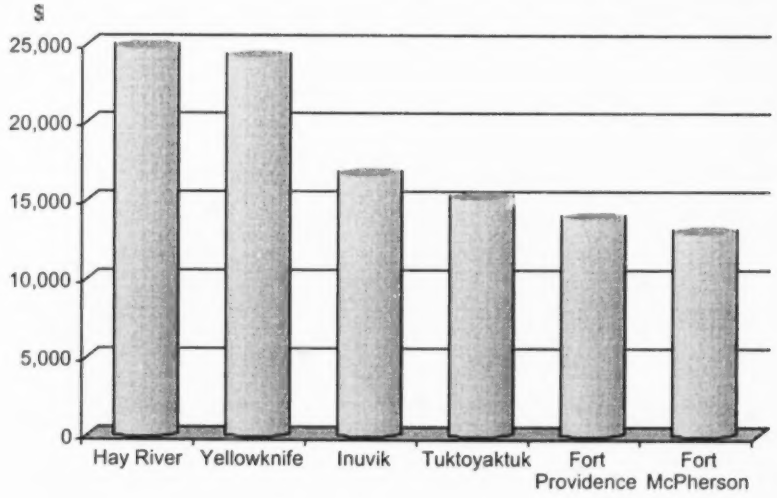
Median Income, by Gender



Overall, the median income among Seniors is lower for NWT males compared to Canada and similar to Canada for NWT females.

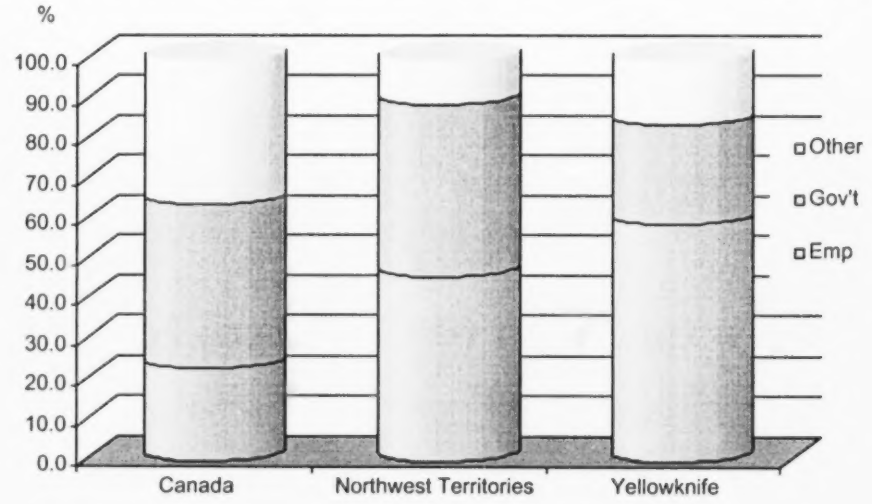
Yellowknife incomes are significantly higher.

Selected Median Income for Male Seniors



Hay River and Yellowknife male Seniors have higher median incomes, while most other communities are at or near $14,000 per year.

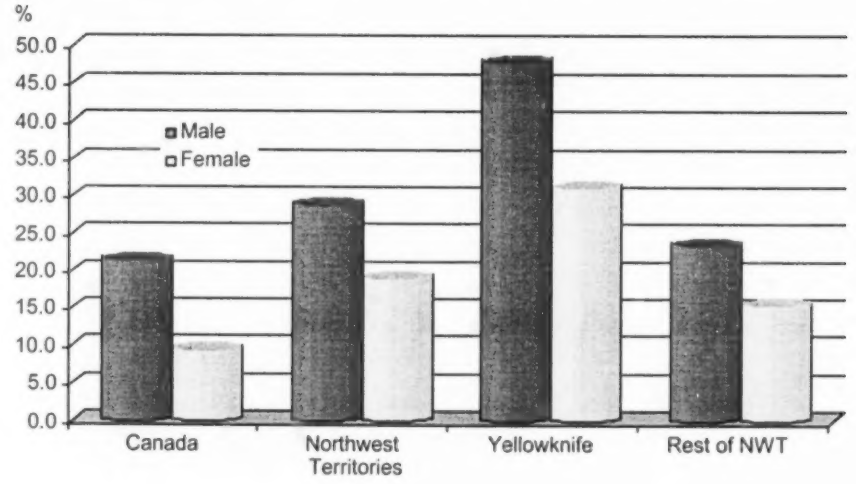
Percent Distribution on Source of Income



Comparing source of income, shows NWT seniors obtain a much higher portion of their income through employment.

Other income, like employment pension plans, are not as common in the NWT.

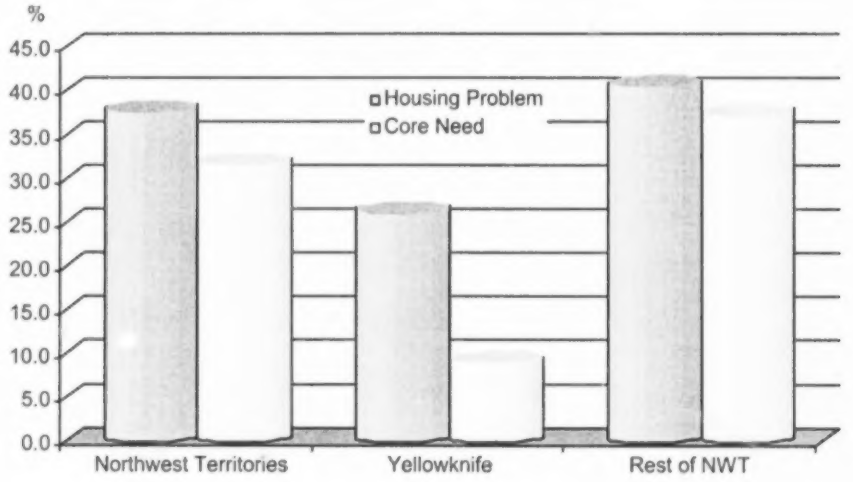
Employment Rates, by Gender



Employment among Seniors is much more common in the NWT than in Canada.

That is particularly true for females and for Yellowknife.

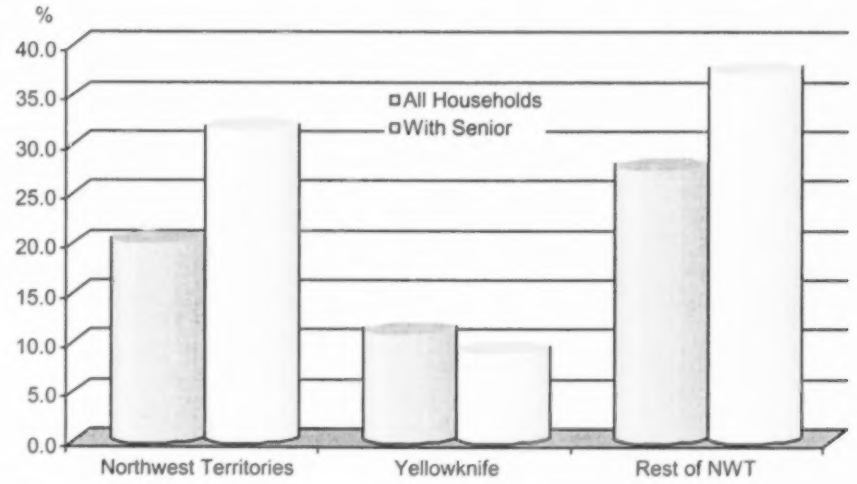
Housing Problems and Core Need, for Seniors



Overall the rate of "core need" is about 32% for household where a Senior lives.

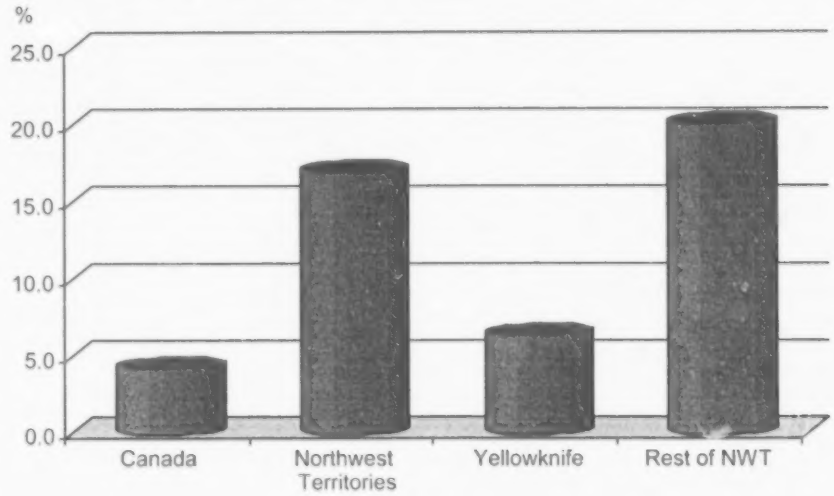
This rate is significantly higher outside of Yellowknife, compared to Yellowknife.

Core Need of Households with Seniors



"Core Need" is higher for households with a Senior resident outside of Yellowknife and just slightly lower in Yellowknife.

Percent Seniors Unable to Speak English



Language ability can influence program design. Some 17% of all NWT seniors do not speak English. This compares with less than 5% for Canada as a whole.

Conclusions

The most significant element of data on NWT Seniors is the phenomenal rate of growth in this population.

However, significant differences exist between Canadian and NWT Seniors that should be considered in program design.

Further, issues and conditions for Seniors outside of Yellowknife are in some cases different than those in Yellowknife.

APPENDIX E:

LIST OF GNWT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR SENIORS IN THE NWT

GNWT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES	DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILE
Extended Health Benefits	HSS
Long Term Care	HSS
Rehabilitation	HSS
Home Care	HSS
Guardianship	HSS
Personal Allowance – Elderly and Disabled Program	HSS
Senior Citizens Home Repair Program	NWTHC*
Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program	NWTHC
Home Ownership: EDAP/IHP	NWTHC
Senior Citizens Supplementary Benefit	ECE
Income Support	ECE
Seniors Home Heating Subsidy Program	ECE
Seniors Property Tax Rebate Program	MACA
Seniors 1-800 Line	HSS/Seniors' Society
Motor Vehicle Licensing	DOT

Note: In the spring 2001, the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation announced the delivery of a new program: Seniors' and/or Disabled Preventive Maintenance Initiative. This program was not included in the review.

Program departments: Health and Social Services (HSS); Education, Culture and Employment (ECE); Northwest Territories Housing Corporation (NWTHC); Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA); Transportation (DOT).